

tree policy

February 2026

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1. Policy statement

- 1.1. believe housing is committed to providing a safe environment for its customers, employees, residents and contractors. Part of this responsibility is to manage the risks associated with trees located within believe housing land ownership and ensure that we comply with all relevant government and regulatory requirements in relation to tree management.
- 1.2. This policy will provide clear guidelines on how we will manage our stock of trees in conjunction with Durham County Council (DCC), with whom we have collaboration and service level agreements for the provision of horticultural and ground maintenance services, including tree maintenance and tree survey work.

2. Policy aims

- 2.1. Ensure we provide a safe environment for customers, employees, residents and contractors to live and/or work in.
- 2.2. Maintain a healthy tree stock with a diverse age range to make full use of the environmental, social and economic benefits this brings.
- 2.3. Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation.
- 2.4. Provide clear lines of responsibility for the management of tree safety.
- 2.5. Provide clarity for customers on our approach to the management of trees on land in our ownership.
- 2.6. Adopt and maintain both passive and active tree assessment regimes, ensuring they are carried out in accordance with recognised industry standards and best practice guidance for tree safety and management.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to any trees that are located on land that we are responsible for.

4. Definitions

'Passive assessment' – a passive tree assessment occurs when colleagues, while going about their daily business or work, pass by a tree and observe any risks or features that need attention. This type of assessment relies on incidental observations made during daily routine activities.

‘Active assessment’ – an active tree assessment involves a deliberate and systematic inspection of trees. This type of assessment is conducted by trained personnel who actively seek out and evaluate potential risks or features that require attention. The assessment is planned and carried out with the specific intent of identifying any tree-related issues. This type of assessment can be basic or detailed.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 The Director of Neighbourhoods has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

5.2 The Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods is responsible for identifying areas where an active tree assessment is required on land that believe housing is responsible for. This will be determined using Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping to highlight zones of ‘high use/occupancy’ and an active assessment regime will be implemented in these areas on a five-year cycle.

5.3 The Neighbourhood Managers will ensure that the policy and associated procedures are embedded within the operational delivery of the Horticultural and Estates service, and that all colleagues are aware of their responsibilities and are adequately trained to carry them out.

5.4 The Horticultural and Estates Team Leaders will be responsible for the operational day-to-day delivery of this policy. Duties include:

- implementing and managing this policy, its aims and associated procedures
- ensuring that any changes to the law, technical guidance or best practice are assessed and implemented to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and risk management
- providing basic staff training, in conjunction with DCC, to relevant colleagues regarding obvious tree risk features to aid identification and reporting
- ensuring that all colleagues/contractors who work on our estates understand the role they play in reporting any tree maintenance concerns to the Horticultural and Estates Team for investigation and action through a passive assessment regime
- promoting awareness throughout believe housing about how colleagues/contractors can report tree concerns into the team
- promoting awareness with customers, residents and stakeholders about how to report any tree concerns to believe housing and ensuring processes are in place to feed back findings and any actions to be taken in a timely manner to the person who reported them
- liaising with DCC about tree works that are beyond our team’s technical ability ensuring identified works are completed to believe housing’s requirements.
- ensuring that the service level agreement (SLA) with DCC, which governs the active tree assessment regime in potential zones of ‘high use or occupancy’, is consistently monitored to confirm timely completion and where necessary appropriate referral for any identified works
- collating management information and preparing monitoring reports for Executive Management Team and Audit Committee as required.

- 5.5 The Health and Safety Team will provide competent health and safety advice, and they will appropriately investigate accidents and incidents involving trees with a view to highlighting any opportunities for improvement in line with the Health and Safety Policy.
- 5.6 All colleagues are responsible for ensuring the policy and procedures are followed and will report any concerns to the Horticultural and Estates Team Leaders for investigation and action. In the event of absence, no response, or failure to action, concerns should be raised directly with the Assistant Director or Director of Neighbourhoods. Concerns can also be raised through the organisation's Whistleblowing Policy.

6 Tree safety commitments

- 6.1 Service requests relating to tree safety risks and legal nuisance will be assessed, and any works programmed according to the priorities for that type of work, as follows:
- dangerous or unstable trees or branches that are likely to cause injury
 - trees obstructing the highway or public footpaths
 - trees causing or highly likely to cause significant damage to property
 - trees obstructing street lighting
 - work to alleviate severe shading or other nuisance
 - thinning.
- 6.2 Service requests relating to other desirable but non-essential tree works consistent with good arboriculture practice will be a lower priority and will only be undertaken where resources and funding allow.
- 6.3 believe housing will not action requests for non-essential tree work that are not consistent with good arboriculture practice or are deemed unnecessary.
- 6.4 Where a tree is located within the curtilage of a believe housing property let to a customer, we will work collaboratively with the customer to ensure tree safety. Customers are responsible for the maintenance and safety of trees within their curtilage, and we will seek their cooperation to address any identified risks or issues in line with this policy and good arboriculture practice.

7 Monitoring and review

- 7.1 The Horticultural and Estates Team Leaders will monitor all tree works carried out by both our Estates Team and DCC on believe housing's behalf (through our collaboration and service level agreements) ensuring compliance with all relevant government and regulatory requirements in relation to tree management.
- 7.2 This policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier where circumstances require.

8 Links to other policies and procedures

- 8.1 believe housing's Health and Safety Policy

9 Complaints

9.1 If a customer is unhappy about the service they have received from us they can make a complaint. The complaint should be made to believe housing in the first instance or alternatively seek advice from the Housing Ombudsman before doing so. Please see believe housing's Complaints, Compliments and Compensation Policy for further details.

10 Useful contacts

- believe housing – visit www.believehousing.co.uk/contact-us/, email hello@believehousing.co.uk or telephone 0300 1311 999.
- Durham County Council – visit www.durham.gov.uk/treemanagement, email help@durham.gov.uk or telephone 0300 026 0000.